



तू भीतर नि आल?
Won't you come inside?





THE HUB OF MANY HEARTHS



CURATORIAL NOTE

Across the Himalayan region, the hearth glows with warm embers as families and friends gather. In the heart of homes, the fire calls inward; the outside cold softens, and its steady warmth nudges stories from everyone seated around it. *Chulh, Miram, Méram, Lyngwiar Dpei, Thab-Lha, Kangri*—these are all iterations of the hearth around which communities build their social ethos, even as the heart remains the same.

The hearth absorbs every one of the stories and individuals that have settled around it over a single day, years, and even generations. It is an evolving space of belonging, of learning, of dialogue, of legacy and heritage. It is where the younger ones have learnt their elders’ ways of the world and where the memory of the past and dreams of the future carry through time. The hearth is the space of becoming, not of ends.

Here, in this hub of many heart(h)s, are gathered stories from across the Himalayas in five pavilions. Each pavilion is built around a hearth tending to a fire of purpose. Identity transcends boundaries and limits of definition. Here, masks are more than craft, flutes more than a musical instrument. Where histories of exclusion have led to collectives fiercely protecting their space of belonging, uneasy conversations are handled with the sensitivity and nurturing they need to truly drive change from within.

Existing as ecologies of community-building, these ideas have seeped beyond the confines of being called a ‘project’ and have become life itself—another hearth which would kindle many more.

One pavilion holds stories of place-sensitive and contextual learning

ecologies while the second introduces those that inspire new life through craft-conservation ecologies. A third holds stories of forerunners that created the first spark; while the next takes you through material journeys forging new explorations. The fifth houses safe spaces of belonging, along with workshops for you to gather around. Lend them an ear.

These stories have not parachuted into their landscape but have been gently stoked by each of these storytellers who make room for many others to gather, coaxing them to weave collectively, so each story resounds deeply with those who become its part.

As you weave your way through the pavilions, let these stories invite you in. There is no sequence, so wander freely. Depending on when you are here, you might even sit with these storytellers in person—bring your stories and let them share theirs.

In this cold of Delhi, be warmed by the fires that beckon you into their glowing warmth. Sit by the hearth of slowing down to get to know, to exchange and to belong.

Warmly,
The hub of many heart(h)s

PS: Feel free to move around the benches to bring yourself closer to the spaces of dialogue, to build a hearth where you find heart!



méram

... the fire carries far,
the glow, the heat, the smoke
layer around it, the hearth
There is warmth here, for the soul

PAVILION 1
The Forerunners



URGAIN DOLMA

Pit Stop Kharu, Ladakh

It isn't always in extraordinary acts or public triumphs that empowerment is felt, but in the small, steady gestures of everyday living.

Empowerment is often quiet, found in steady, everyday actions rather than grand gestures. Pit Stop Kharu, is a Green Pit Stop in Kharu, Ladakh, run entirely by a women's Self-Help Group. In a region busy with tourists, it has become a unique space: by the community, for the community.

The six women who manage Pit Stop Kharu live nearby. From being homeworkers and caregivers, they now run the café and exhibition space, prepare food and even manage pop-up events across India. Through this work, they contribute significantly to their households and earn respect from family and neighbours.

One of them, Urgain Dolma, Secretary of the SHG, balances caring for her three young boys, elder family members and husband alongside her responsibilities at Pit Stop Kharu. *"Subah-subah woh log bhi to pooja karte hain. Pehle to main ghar, phir bachchon ko sambhaalti hoon... woh sab sambhaal ke main Pit Stop Kharu mein kaam karne jaati hoon."*

From learning to cook food from outside her culture—like baking cakes—to traveling beyond Ladakh with her team, Urgain embraces every learning moment. She is now one of the most skilled needle-felters and knits socks, shawls and caps in the quiet moments at Pit Stop Kharu. Exposure to life beyond Ladakh has not changed her humility, but strengthened her sense of self. Recently, she even self-sponsored a pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya.

The women's togetherness is reflected in every task. Each has quietly transformed her life, discovering skills, confidence and independence. Together, they have created a space where every traveller entering Pit Stop Kharu is welcomed with warmth, care and a true sense of home.

PIT STOP KHARU IS A JOINT INITIATIVE BETWEEN ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION, LEDeG, THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT/ LEH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, KHARU NAMBARDAR AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.





Urgain conducted a Needle Wool Felting Workshop as part of the festival, bringing her material practice as a story to Delhi.

AAYAT AZIZ

Generation M, Kashmir

Aayat stands at the meeting point of faith, identity and modern life. Having spent years outside Kashmir, she grew increasingly conscious of her roots—what it means to be a young Muslim woman navigating cultures, expectations and the weight of being seen. Her experiences sharpened her sense of self and why young girls like her deserve spaces that honour both faith and individuality; those who practice their faith can embrace modernity without compromising on the ideals of their individuality.

Generation M emerged from this conviction—a space of identity reclamation and not performance. For Aayat, modest wear is not a trend but a grounding—clothing that allows young Muslim women to feel comfortable, confident and connected to who they are. She creates pieces that are modest, breathable, sustainable and attuned to the realities of her generation, where faith intersects with fashion, community and self-expression.

As a Kashmiri, Aayat also feels the shrinking of shared spaces for young women. Through Generation M, she is rebuilding that space to find strength in collective identity. Aayat envisions a community where young Muslim women can explore personal growth, support one another, lead conversations and navigate modern pressures without losing the essence of their beliefs.

For her, Generation M is a label that dispels all other labels and a movement stitched with faith, dignity and joy—a place where young women can step into themselves fully, confidently and together.

AAYAT IS A FELLOW OF MOOL KASHMIR'S RISE UP: THE SUSTAINABLE KASHMIR FELLOWSHIP, 2025-26. THE MOOL FELLOWSHIP IS SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





Aayat brought her capsule collection from Generation M of 5 garments and a few hijabs for visitors to try.



ZUBAIR RIYAZ

Kashur Naqsh, Ganderbal, Kashmir

“I’m an aspiring eco-conscious entrepreneur, reviving the heritage of Kashmir for better health of people and the planet.”

Eighteen-year-old Zubair grew up in Wahidpora, Ganderbal, where willow wickerwork—*veer kani*, *keani keam*—remains Kashmir’s only unmechanised craft. His grandfather once wove wicker into *kangris*, a patience-driven labour shaped by attentive hands and an instinctive reading of the material.

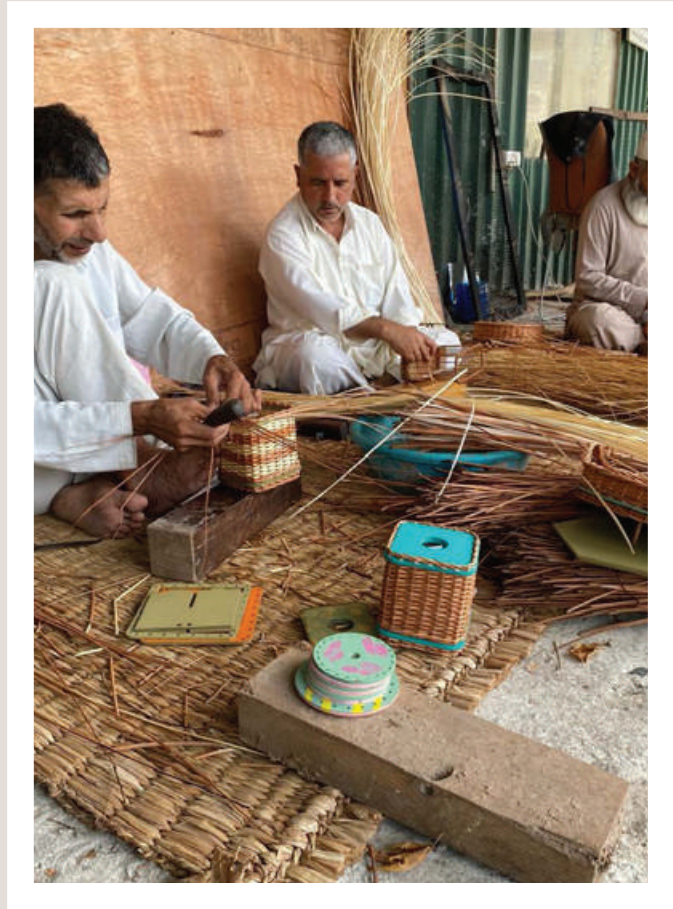
During his time at a creative residency in Srinagar at Kani Home, Zubair met weavers and craft communities, learning the subtleties of splitting willow, the rhythm of knotting and the sensitivity each form demands. He realised that craft is more than technique—it is a sensibility, a way of tending to heritage as one would tend to an ecosystem.

Zubair conceptualised Kashur Naqsh: a vision for reviving Kashmiri craft through eco-conscious making rooted in local materials during his time as fellow. It is not nostalgia but possibility—shaping contemporary utility objects while nurturing healthier livelihoods, living systems and cultural continuity. Zubair hopes to create pathways for Kashmiri youth to inherit these skills and build futures grounded in their own landscapes.

Now at Studio Kilab, he deepens his understanding of the practice with willow wickerwork, guided by traditional wisdom and ecological thinking while continuing to build Kashur Naqsh. His work attempts to reconnect communities with Kashmir’s cultural and environmental roots—reminding us that heritage too, must be tended slowly, sensitively, as an ecosystem rather than a single product.

ZUBAIR IS A FELLOW OF MOOL KASHMIR’S RISE UP: THE SUSTAINABLE KASHMIR FELLOWSHIP, 2025-26. THE MOOL FELLOWSHIP IS SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





Zubair's work with Kashmiri willow wickerwork as part of the 'Hub of many Heart(h)s' during the festival.

KARAMAT ALI

School for Van Gujjar Children, Corbett Uttarakhand

Born into the Van Gujjar tribe, a semi-nomadic pastoral community that has lived in harmony with forests for centuries, the bond between human and buffalo is, for Karamat, both familial and foundational. But curtailed forest rights have pushed the community toward forced settlement, limiting recognition, access and opportunity. His own education ended after Class 8, when a tiger attacked a schoolmate. Though the boy survived, fear kept Karamat away from school forever.

During his fellowship, he felt the depth of what had been missing—little documentation on Van Gujjars, fading traditional knowledge and practices and the absence of meaningful learning spaces for his community members.

*“Bhatakte bhatakte,
Bhatakte bhatakte
Mil jayegi manzilein.
Gumrah toh woh hain
Jo ghar se nikle hi nahi.”*

Karamat wrote these lines reflecting on his experience when he left home for the first time for his fellowship interview. The verse has become the grounding spirit of his work today—facing fear, uncertainty and systemic barriers, he has set out to bridge these gaps hoping to transform the narrative of his community.

His film *Birds and Buffaloes* juxtaposes Van Gujjar life through the journeys of Karamat and his batchmate Tafeek—one still in the forest, one now in a permanent settlement.

With minimal resources, he founded a school that enrolls nearly 40 children. It is not just an open classroom but a meeting place of forest wisdom and modern learning. A physically secure space of opportunity, Karamat hopes to nurture pride, continuity and future pathways, while continuing to document the Van Gujjar way of life as a learning resource for the outside world and for the younger generations of the community.

KARAMAT IS A FELLOW OF THE GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD WESTERN HIMALAYAS FELLOWSHIP, 2024 AND A RECIPIENT OF THE GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANT, 2025.



Karamat’s film, *Birds and Buffaloes* – a story of two Van Gujjar boys, was screened within the pavilion to understand his background and the context of his work. *Birds and Buffaloes* was the start of his journey of setting up the school for Van Gujjar children.



THANGSOI M. KHIAMNIUNGAN

Community Conservation Area, Choklangan, Nagaland

Thangsoi M. Khamniungan is a filmmaker and conservationist from the Khamniungan Naga community in Choklangan, Nagaland.

Thangsoi's conservation journey began with the Hoolock gibbon, a species whose survival depends on preserving parts of the forest. Growing up in a village where hunting was a tradition, he realised the need to balance wildlife protection with community livelihoods. His goal is to conserve 30–40% of the forest, so gibbons and other species can thrive, while local traditions continue.

Before this, in 2022, he made the documentary *Honey Hunters*, exploring the indigenous practice of cliff honey harvesting and his tribe's respectful relationship with bees. This work deepened his understanding of local knowledge and sustainable interaction with nature.

Thangsoi now engages students through nature education, forest walks, leaf museums and awareness programmes, teaching them about insects, birds, plants and forest ecosystems. He screens conservation films for the community, especially children, and explains their relevance in simple, accessible ways.

Leading the student council and working to declare part of his community forest a Community Conservation Area, Thangsoi blends species protection, community engagement, and education. His work ensures that while the Hoolock gibbon thrives, the forest as a whole—and the people who live in it—benefit together.

THANGSOI IS A GREEN HUB NORTHEAST VIDEO FELLOW, 2021 AND RECIPIENT OF GREEN HUB CONSERVATION STIPEND, 2022-23.



Thangsoi's film, *Honey Hunters of My Village*, was screened within the pavilion.



REJOICE GASSAH

Makunda Nature Club, Karimganj, Assam

Rejoice, from Dosdewa in Karimganj, Assam, has walked the forests since his youth, learning to read the songs of birds, rustle of leaves and movements of wildlife. Under the guidance of Dr. Vijay Anand Ismavel at Makunda Christian Hospital, he began documenting the biodiversity of the lesser-known low-altitude dipterocarp forests capturing birds, hoolock gibbons, butterflies, and insects through photography and videography.

Supported by a conservation grant, Rejoice's work focuses on systematic documentation along forest trails, creating a database for researchers, conservationists, and nature enthusiasts. His approach goes beyond recording species; it engages the local community, especially youth, in understanding and caring for their forests. Through guided walks, forest camps and educational initiatives, he shares the value of wildlife and the importance of preserving habitats.

Rejoice also promotes eco-tourism, designing experiences that allow people to witness Karimganj's rich biodiversity while fostering respect for the land. His efforts ensure that hoolock gibbons swing safely among the trees, that rare birds continue their migrations and that the forest remains a living classroom.

REJOICE IS A GREEN HUB NORTH EAST VIDEO FELLOW, 2018 AND GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANTEE, 2022.



The Healing Power of Forests: Forests as a Solution for Public Wellness, was screened within the pavilion. It follows Rejoice Gassah, a passionate bird guide and staff member in the biodiversity department at Makunda Hospital in Karimganj, Assam. Rejoice shares his deep love for nature as he documents the local flora and fauna, trains local youth, and works to protect the region's rich biodiversity.

Filmmakers: Green Hub Fellows Daiolang Paslein, Deep Chhetri, Lobsang Namgyal, Mukrang Timung (Batch of 2023-24)



LALHMUNSIAMI PACHUAU & DAISY LALTHANTLUANGI

Teirei Forest Waste Management, Mizoram

“Hum apne community ke pehle ladkiyan thi jo state ke bahar gaye. Uss samay logon ne bahut daraya, nahi jaane diya. Aaj humara basti se girls Singapore or Dubai bhi ja rahe hai”

Siami and Daisy were the first girls from their community to leave Mizoram, traveling for a fellowship in Assam. At the time, everyone warned them of the ‘evils of the outside world’, instilling fear about girls leaving home. But driven by the determination to see another world, they crossed that threshold with a single step, changing the story for the girls who would come after them.

For Siami, their experience of working on the ground and crafting a waste management proposal in Chullyu, Arunachal Pradesh sparked the thought: if it could be implemented there then why not at home in Teirei Forest? Daisy became her partner to carry the idea forward. Bringing the community together was not easy. Still viewed as young girls, with locals asking, “*yeh kya hi kar lengi?*” and waste management dismissed as unimportant, they faced skepticism. But together with the village head, council president and elders, they designed a comprehensive waste management plan, spent time spreading awareness, and rallied support.

Mitti workshops for children became a tool for environmental awareness. Using the innocent act of playing in mud, children who once littered now use pocket dustbins and minimize plastic use. Bamboo dustbins line streets, and the village actively participates in cleanup.

Their initiative has built trust and recognition. As Siami says, “*Ab basti mein, block mein kuch bhi programme hone se humko bulate hain, kuch government related ya grant related work hota hai to village council president humko rakhte hai. Ye sab humko mila, bahut acha laga.*”



LALHMUNSIAMI (SIAMI) AND DAISY ARE GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM FELLOWS, 2021-22 & 2022-23 RESPECTIVELY, AND GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANTEES, 2023.



AAKRITI DHIMAN

Lost Art of Tankri, Himachal Pradesh

“Tankri finds me more than I find it. There’s an intimate relationship that we’ve built with each other that leads me to itself.”

Aakriti’s inquiry unfolds with her tracing her mother tongue written in Tankri script—once the visual anchor for more than twenty languages of Western Himalayan communities. Today, it teeters on the brink of disappearance, surviving only on temple walls, household utensils, family heirlooms and the memories of a handful of native speakers and scholars like Harikrishan Murari. Entire dialogues, worldviews and ways of being risk vanishing.

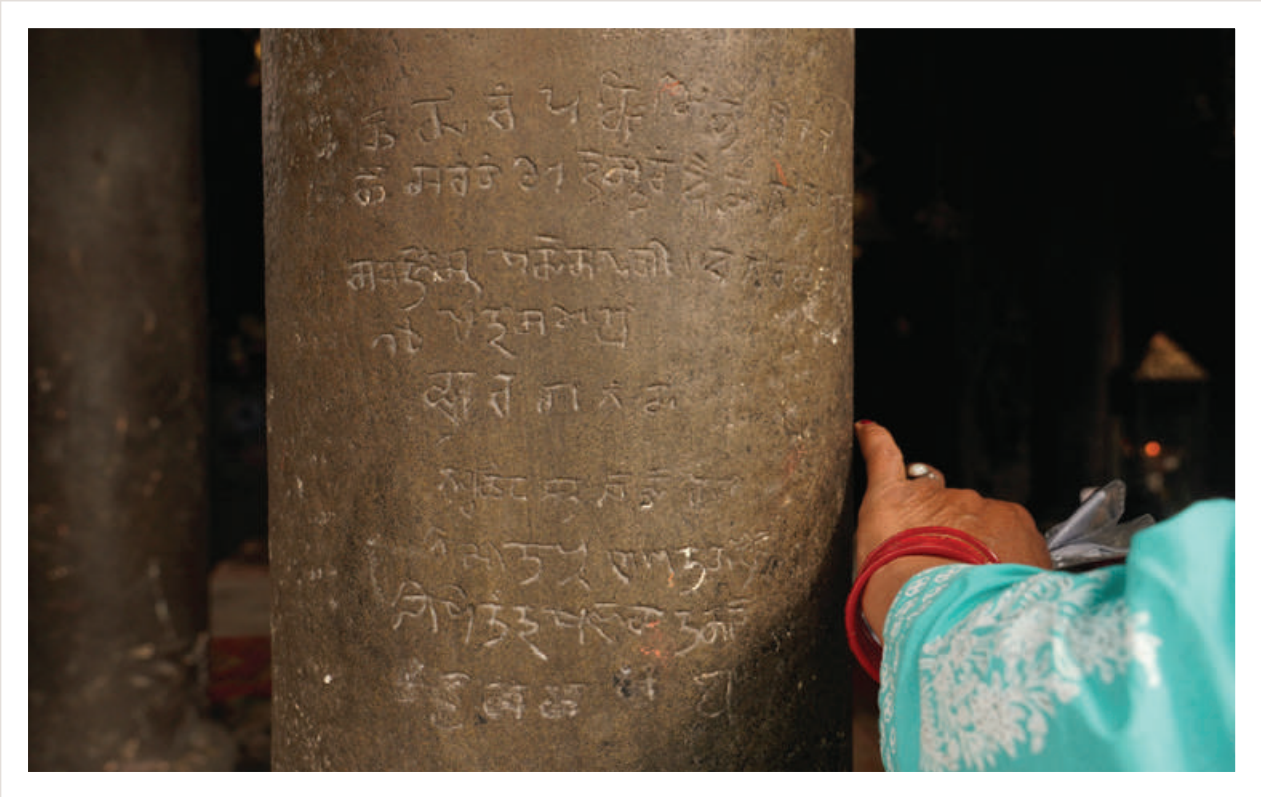
Language is world-making: it carries the ways communities understand themselves, negotiate the world and preserve knowledge across generations. As the everyday acts of listening, speaking and reading fade, Tankri’s script becomes vulnerable to turning into mere symbols, stripped of meaning, with the memory of its dialogue and the world it once invoked lost to time and artefact.

Her search has taken her from archival texts and family heirlooms to temple walls, fort inscriptions, old utensils and Pahadi paintings. She connects with the last scribes and writers of the script, visual designers and local communities, documenting, digitising and creating spaces for Tankri to be read, written and experienced while looking beyond the script and noticing what has been rendered invisible.

Her work is not revival for its own sake but a contextual grounding for Tankri to be recognised as a vessel of identity, heritage and the ways people of the Western Himalayas have made sense of their world. The project aims to preserve Tankri as both archive and dialogue, offering a lens into heritage, cultural knowledge and the delicate interplay between language and self.

AAKRITI IS A RECIPIENT OF THE GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANTS, 2025.









heartha
me to you,
not still,
me and you,
share a hearth as we sit here
d belong to the warmth.





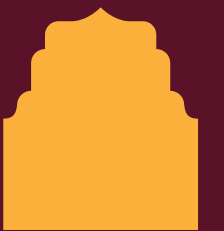






कांगड़ी
the years settle in soot, ash, stones
Time and its threads will move in story
and there will always be a hearth
To gather around...

PAVILION 2
The Awakeners



BATSKHEM THABAH, BADAPBIANG DKHAR, IBARIHUN MAJAW

Raibah Living Library, Meghalaya

When Batskhem arrived at Raibah Government Lower Primary School in Meghalaya in 2021, it was nearly abandoned—overgrown, quiet and waiting. Instead of seeing ruins, he saw a space for life, for learning, for memory. With the children and elders of the community, he began transforming it into a green campus—a place where care for the earth and care for one’s own heart could grow together.

From this shared effort emerged the Raibah Living Library, a place for learning, cultural exchange and community pride. More than a room of books, it is a hub for conserving the Khasi community’s living indigenous knowledge embodied in Khasi culture—a space of ownership, renewal and identity.

Here, elders serve as living guides, translating embodied wisdom into lived experience. Children walk through seasons and forests, learning to recognise plants, being mindful of the natural rhythms and the ties between land and food. Knowledge is not confined to pages; it echoes older practices of learning that once took place around the hearth in Khasi homes.

“For Khasis, education starts around the hearth. We sit with elders and learn about discipline, cleanliness, moral education, clan relations and culture—knowledge passed from generation to generation.”

Stories, traditional games, handicrafts and songs become lessons in culture and ethics—each act as a thread linking generations and nurturing a sensitive, conscious future.

Raibah is not merely a school. It is a hearth of culture, where ancestral wisdom, community care, and environmental sensitivity converge—shaping young hearts and minds for years to come.

BATSKHEM THABAH, IBARIHUN MAJAW AND BADAPBIANG DKHAR ARE RECIPIENTS OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANT, 2024.



SUPER MEIMEI, JOYSHREE & TAHAJ

Super Meimei Programme, Gobuk Arunachal Pradesh

When Joyshree and Tahaj began the Green School in Gobuk as part of their Responsible Tourism model, they realised that for the initiative to endure, it needed facilitators from the community itself, not outsiders. This understanding gave rise to the Super Meimei programme, where “Meimei,” an Adi term for elder sister, became a symbol of knowledge, responsibility and leadership.

Initially plagued by hesitation and diffidence, the women leading the programme—the “Meimei” doubted their ability to teach. Through conversations, guidance and small responsibilities, their confidence grew. The real turning point came during a trail walk, where they guided children through the forest, identifying medicinal and other plants and explaining their uses. In that moment, they felt the power and legitimacy of their knowledge. They realised they could lead, teach, and inspire—not by performing, but by simply living their traditions. Their expertise in agriculture, foraging, storytelling and craft, which is lived and inherited rather than learned from books, was being offered gently to the next generation.

By this simple act of being, the Meimei quietly asserted who they were. This act alone began to break gender stereotypes and societal stigmas, challenging the notion that women’s work was only domestic. Their confidence has transformed with them even leading walks in the annual biodiversity meet in Gobuk for the attendees which includes prominent naturalists, conservationists from across the country.

Today, the Super Meimei are the heart of Green School, Gobuk. They find value and responsibility as a community of facilitators, nurturing children in Adi ways of knowing through grass-loom weaving, trail walks and other immersive activities. They lead trails for children and for tourists to Gobuk. Income from these supports the Green School’s activities.

Place-based knowledge flows through these facilitators, carrying generations of inherited wisdom. By offering this knowledge through everyday practices, the Super Meimei programme ensures that Green School Gobuk thrives as a living classroom.

GREEN SCHOOL GOBUK AND THE SUPER MEIMEI PROGRAMME ARE SUPPORTED BY CANOPY COLLECTIVE, GREEN HUB AND ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION. JOYSHREE AND TAHAJ ARE FELLOWS OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM FELLOWSHIP, 2022-23.





NUSRAT FAROOQ

Wular Eco Club, Wular Lake, Kashmir

Wular, in Kashmir, is one of the largest freshwater lakes in India. For Nusrat, Wular is not just a lake—it is memory, belonging and life itself. Growing up on its banks in Bandipora, she absorbed the rhythms of birds and water, listened to her grandmother’s stories and learned from the wealth of the ecosystem around her.

From these early experiences, she understood that relationships are the root of community, shaping people and guiding ways of living in harmony with the world. Witnessing the lake’s quiet suffering stirred in her a deep commitment: to protect what was being lost and reimagine how the young generation could live with the Earth, not just on it. Wular Eco Hub is that understanding made tangible. Nusrat brings attention, mutual learning and respect to nurture relationships between children, elders and soil. Passion, contribution, innovation, patience, adventure and kindness guide every initiative and interaction.

As an act of knowing and feeling, muddied hands—tending plants or exploring the earth—are as much a part of building knowledge and relationships as nature walks or storytelling. Passionately driven to understand learning and education, Nusrat continues to grow alongside her students, embracing Montessori principles and evolving practices to build a nurturing landscape of learning on Wular’s banks.

The Hub aims to unfold through three wings: the Eco-School, where hands-on, nature-based learning nurtures creativity and life skills; the Plant Nursery, cultivating native and medicinal plants; and the Zero Waste Store, supporting eco-friendly crafts and local ecological entrepreneurs. Here, as Nusrat’s dream, a new generation would grow attuned to the land, people and waters that raised them.



NUSRAT IS A FELLOW OF MOOL KASHMIR’S RISE UP: THE SUSTAINABLE KASHMIR FELLOWSHIP, 2024-25. THE MOOL FELLOWSHIP IS SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.



RIGZEN WANGMO & SONAM DORJE

Village Lab Foundation, Sumoor, Ladakh

“Who decides who can teach, what one can learn, where, and how? Who decides what is ‘good’ education?”

Growing up in Sumoor, Nubra Valley, Rigzen was always told that good education lived elsewhere—outside. Outside the village, outside the community, somewhere beyond the mountains in distant institutions. So she left, as so many children do, chasing the promise of something better. With every mile, the distance grew—between her and the land that shaped her earliest knowing.

Village Lab Foundation Ladakh, is Rigzen and her co-founder Sonam Dorje’s return to close that distance, and to find an alternative to that fractured image. It reimagines what “outside” means to a village classroom while inviting an “other” world in—on its own terms. It begins with a simple shift: letting the village become the classroom, and letting its people—elders, farmers, weavers, monks—become the teachers. Here, knowledge is not contained within walls. It moves with children along *churpons*—the traditional water systems—through orchards and Ladakhi *tsas*, to gompas and fields. The knowledge is everywhere, outside, where elders become facilitators, children become explorers and learning becomes a shared rhythm rather than a hierarchy.

Sixteen small libraries, placed quietly across Sumoor, bring the world closer—gentle invitations for curiosity, always within reach of a child. Modules on farming, responsible tourism, traditional health, wool crafts and local history are taught not as subjects but as lived inheritances handed down through parents, grandparents and the village as a whole—everyone becoming a guardian of the lab. ‘Good’ education thus becomes relational, stitched through trust, identity and intergenerational exchange.

Rigzen’s journey outward opened her to possibility; her return inward ensures no child feels inadequate to their own place again. Village Lab restores the dignity of knowing and owning one’s identity. What makes it a lab is its spirit of experimentation and continuous brewing—not resigned to static curriculums—and its courage to let the village lead, allowing its wisdom to shape a learning ecosystem where learning returns home.

After all, it takes a village.

SONAM IS A RECIPIENT OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANT 2025.





ANAND BALLABH JOSHI

Innovator, Kausani, Uttarakhand

Indian wool is a quiet giant—abundant, resilient and largely overlooked. Nearly 75 million sheep graze across the country, yet more than half the wool they grow is discarded. In the hills, this loss is not abstract; it is felt in shrinking incomes, fractured local markets and traditions drifting out of reach.

Amid this, in Almora, stands a visionary innovator Anand Ballabh Joshi, whose life’s work is guided by an ethic of collective upliftment deeply influenced by Gandhian principles of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. He listens deeply—to herders, to the wool, to the artisans hands that spin and also seek income, and to the shifting ecologies—whether market or climatic—that shape all of them. His workshop is a factory, a training space, a tinkering room but on the whole—an experimental lab, where every material, person and interaction is the basis for research and knowledge exchange.

For years, he has designed small, low-cost tools that allow pastoralists and artisans—especially women—to process local wool at home. Wool openers, hand carders, *namda* machines, solar-powered charkhas: each machine emerges from long observation of field realities and from the moral simplicity of wanting to make people’s lives easier. He studies how grazing patterns are changing, how wool quality responds to new terrains, how an artisan’s wrist moves, what a herder can afford, and what a village market can absorb. Every prototype is tested, repaired, rethought and tested again.

Training is woven into the work. Trainees arrive carrying the wool from their own districts; he studies the fibre with them, and the machine evolves in response. His process is circular—learn from the ground, design, teach, and return to the ground. In a wool economy dependent on imports, his innovations help reengineer local value chains that honour both people and place through machines born from the lived intelligence of communities.

ANAND’S WORK IS SUPPORTED BY DESI OON (CENTRE FOR PASTORIALISM) AND ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.















Tapchhak zawl ...
they come and go,
Some sit, drift,
the fire is tended
the cold as welcome,
To find home here,
the hearth will always make room

PAVILION 3
**Safekeeping &
Belongingness**



PARIXIT & CHITISH KAFLEY, PRADIP & PABAN MANDAL, ANUJA MITAL Kaso Bandhu Project, Kaziranga North Bank Assam

At the heart of the Kaso Project is a simple truth: freshwater turtles on the north bank of Kaziranga do not live in isolation—they coexist with people in everyday landscapes. They surface in backyard ponds, slip through paddy fields and shelter in seasonal wetlands. This region is a global hotspot for freshwater turtles, home to 21 species, each a thread in a rich, thriving ecosystem. Their abundance is remarkable, yet the ubiquity means their protection depends entirely on the communities who share their lives with them. Conservation work here cannot be distanced from the context; it must be embedded in lived experience.

The Kaso Project places this stewardship squarely in local hands. Across Behali, Gangmouthan and Gameri, elders, youth, farmers and fishers—known as Kaso Bandhu—come together to observe, record and care for turtles. Simple, non-invasive tools—smartphone-friendly forms to log water quality, sightings and habitat notes—allow monitoring without disrupting daily life. But the project goes beyond data, investing in dialogue: it cultivates sensitivity, curiosity and wonder. Children craft turtle models, conversations spark fascination with softshells and flapshells and community gatherings nurture pride in wetlands, ponds and seasonal floodplains.

Paraxit Kafley, Chitish Kafley, Anuja Mital, Pradip Mandal and Paban Mandal bring their diverse expertise and passions to work alongside communities, sharing science while listening to lived knowledge and creating spaces where the community itself speaks the language of conservation, transcending traditional notions of citizen science. The database is simple, the methods non-obtrusive, but the impact is profound: shared responsibility, care and allegiance to turtles in backyards, ponds and fields. Here, everyday encounters become acts of stewardship, and the rich, species-diverse hotspot of Kaziranga is not only documented—it is loved, protected, and co-inhabited.

PARAXIT IS A GREEN HUB NORTH EAST VIDEO FELLOW, 2017 AND GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANTEE, 2024.



Background Image ©Dhritiman Mukherjee.



ISHITA KHANNA & CHERING NORBU

Spiti Water Access Project, Spiti Himachal Pradesh

In Spiti's cold desert, winter turns water into stone. Sources freeze, rivers fall silent and each morning begins with a long, punishing walk through snow to fetch a few cans of water. For everyone in the village, this daily labour becomes a quiet struggle for survival through the long season of white.

The Spiti Water Access Project grew from this stark reality. What began as an effort to move water up the mountain became, in time, a way of bringing people together. Volunteer bike riders travelled across valleys to join the villagers in Pangmo and Lidang to build something that could endure the winter—solar-passive water rooms shaped from local mud and stone, warmed by sunlight and collective purpose. Solar pumps now lift water from the riverbed into these insulated structures, keeping it from freezing even at -30°C .

But the true transformation lies in how these rooms have come alive. Imagined simply as storage spaces, they have become small sanctuaries of community warmth—places where people gather, speak, rest and share the slow patience of winter as water flows quietly behind their conversations.

For the riders on the 'Spiti Water Project Ride', the work became a grounding journey.

Here in the stillness of snow, water and community come together, both warmed by the sun. And in building for one another, riders and villagers have shaped more than infrastructure—they have shaped a space of belonging, community making community.



SPITI WATER PROJECT IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN SPITI ECOSPHERE, MUSE AND ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.



LUCKY NEOG

Queer-e-Junglers, Delhi/ Assam

“Our dream is of queering conservation, where no one is left out of the green future.”

At the heart of Queer-e-Junglers is a simple truth: nature belongs to everyone, and conservation cannot be a privilege reserved for a few. Across India, queer, trans, caste-oppressed and marginalised communities have long been excluded from public green spaces. The boundaries defining identity have translated into rigid structures and practices of exclusion, where safety has become transactional—a privilege of dominant groups—the fundamental, biological right to nature having been stripped away. In such a time, acts of solidarity, acceptance and belonging become revolutionary.

Founded in 2024, Queer-e-Junglers is a queer-led nature collective that centers care, belonging and inclusion in conservation. The collective leverages the power of community as a social space, building inclusive ecosystems of care, visibility and leadership to reclaim nature and make room for those who have been forcefully and systemically pushed away.

The ethos of Queer-e-Junglers is about creating a fiercely guarded safe space—a brave, accessible, and welcoming environment where queer and marginalized individuals can connect with nature. Here, care for biodiversity becomes inseparable from care for each other, fostering shared responsibility for both human and non-human life.

Local queer and trans youth are trained to facilitate walks, document flora and fauna, lead storytelling sessions and anchor community activities. Forest walks, nature journaling, fungi foraging and creative workshops help junglers connect with biodiversity. Tools are simple, non-invasive and site-specific—allowing engagement while honoring safety and comfort. Here, nature is healer, teacher and a shared home—and everyone is invited to belong.

LUCKY, FOUNDER OF QUEER-E-JUNGLEERS, A QUEER & TRANS-LED NATURE COLLECTIVE, WAS PART OF THE GREEN HUB VIDEO FELLOWSHIP, 2018. QUEER-E-JUNGLEERS ARE RECIPIENTS OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANTS, 2025.





DECHIN CHOTTON, MERWYN COUTINHO

Himalayan Fringes Project, Zemithang

Arunachal Pradesh

In the Pangchen valley of Arunachal Pradesh, *Pang-chhen*, “the land free from sin”—waste is not merely material; it is a moral question. Here, communities have long lived by Buddhist vows that bind them to care for land, life and spirit. The Himalayan Fringes Project grows from this cultural soil, shaping a context-responsive, community-led model where behaviour change arises not from external instruction but from within—by reimagining and reframing waste through the ways of Monpa life, tying it into their way of life. It becomes greater than a waste management project, harking a cultural shift.

One of the core drivers of this ecosystem is Dechin, whose fellowship in responsible tourism shaped her understanding of waste as both ecological and cultural. Belonging to Pangchen, this connection opened the door for her to return home and anchor the project in its earliest—and most challenging—months. As a Monpa and the first on-ground member of the Himalayan Fringes team, she became the bridge between the project’s principles and the lived realities of the villages.

She did this not by designing the model, but by mobilising people: going house to house, speaking with families about waste, demonstrating segregation by hand and ensuring that every household felt seen, heard and supported. She even learned to drive so she could reach distant villages independently. Through her patience, consistency and integrity, the project slowly began taking root—not as an outsider’s idea, but as something that felt native to Pangchen.

The first step of the Himalayans Fringes project in Arunachal Pradesh began with the Gorsam Kora Festival—a centuries-old gathering held around the 12th-century Gorsam Chorten, the second-largest stupa of its kind after Boudhanath in Nepal. Gorsam is a cultural and spiritual magnet for the valley, drawing monks, riders, pilgrims and hundreds of families each year. It was here that the Himalayan Fringes team first introduced the ethic of “My Waste, My Responsibility,” working with festival visitors, monks and youth groups to demonstrate what a clean, community-led celebration could look like. Riders were trained as Himalayan ambassadors, carrying these principles across mountain routes and village gatherings.

Behaviour change is fragile—easily lost in translation—and for it to take root, it must be patient, relational and deeply attentive to the subtleties of a community. Across the 14 villages of Zemithang, the Himalayan Fringes Project now stands as an extension of an old truth: in a valley where vows guide life, caring for the land is not an initiative but a collective, cultivated promise—renewed every day by the people who call Pangchen home.



DECHIN IS A FELLOW OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM FELLOWSHIP, 2021-22. THE HIMALAYAN FRINGES PROJECT IS AN INITIATIVE BY FURTHER & BEYOND SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.



Images © 2025 Himalayan Fringes Project & Dechin Chotton.

ASHIMA SACHDEVA KHEMKA

Changthang Football Initiative, Changthang, Ladakh

Football is one of the simplest acts of play, almost instinctive. At 13,000 feet, the air is thin and every step demands effort. Still, children run across the turf with ease—chasing a ball, chasing each other, chasing the thrill of movement. For them, it is just a game—but on the vast plateau of Ladakh, that game becomes a reason to gather, to belong, to move together.

The flatness of the plateau, the space between the mountains, the biting wind—they all shape the way children move here. As Coach Kalyan says, *“Because of such high altitude, these children have more stamina and are more resilient than other young players across Ladakh, and perhaps in India.”*

The Changthang Football Initiative was born from a group of alumni determined to create a space where this instinctive joy could flourish. SAVE—Students Association for Village Education—is an alumni network of students who grew up in these high deserts. They returned to their villages with a simple but powerful mission: to give today’s children the opportunities they themselves had missed. The alumni volunteers, together with Pel Drukpa Charitable Trust and the 18 village communities, have built an ecosystem that shields the young players from harshness and nurtures possibility, ensuring that them being ‘remote’ is never an obstruction. To protect them even from injury and the harsh ground of the cold desert, a bright green AstroTurf now stretches against the stark, rugged mountains of Chumathang, allowing the game to unfold unhindered. It is a small fixture of permanence in a nomadic landscape; a locus around which the community gathers.

The field is also a way to build a link to the land—teaching children to respect the turf beneath their feet and the community that stands behind them. The white lines on the mountains now mark more than a playing area—they trace a place to discover, to dream, to test limits and to celebrate the fact that even in the remotest corners, children can belong and imagine a future of their own making.

CHANGTHANG FOOTBALL IS AN INITIATIVE BY SAVE AND IS SUPPORTED BY TOYBANK INDIA, PEL DRUKPA CHARITABLE TRUST, FIRE AND FURY CORPS AND ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





AKSHAY JASROTIA

Himachal Ghumantu Pashupalak Mahasabha, Himachal Pradesh

Pastoral life is shaped by movement. It is an inherited relationship of care, reciprocity and guardianship of land. For generations in the Western Himalayas, herders have followed grass and seasons, tending mixed flocks whose wool sustains both mountain ecologies and local economies. Wool itself carries the knowledge of forage, weather, rhythm and animal wellbeing—a knowledge woven through everyday movement.

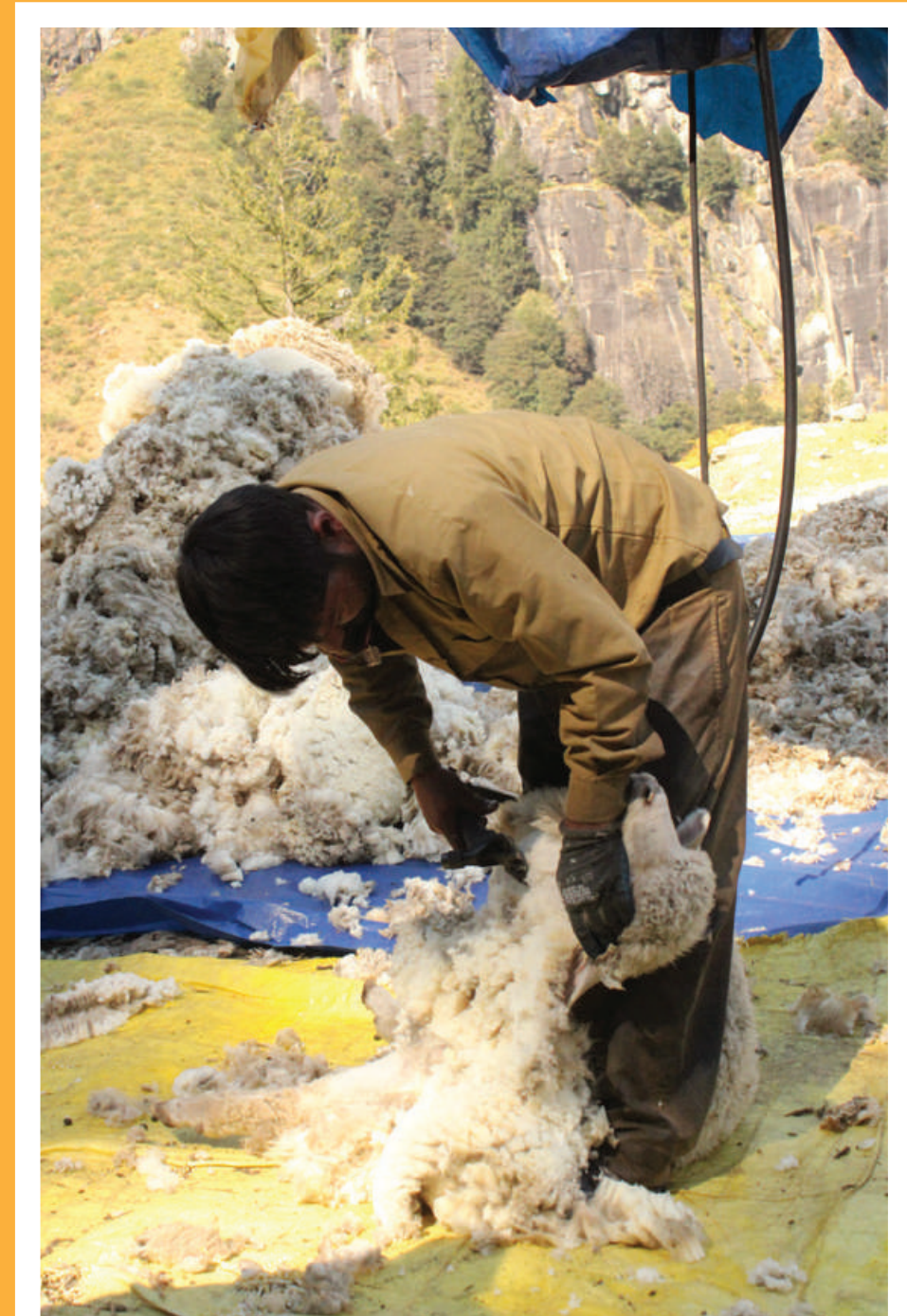
Yet today, it struggles to find value in markets that favour imported fibres and diminish its worth. Policies and tree-planting programmes restrict grazing routes. Climate stress weakens grasslands and flock health. And as younger generations are pulled away from migration, the skill, pride and continuity embedded in wool risk being left behind.

Amid this shift, Akshay Jasrotia, advisor to the Himachal Ghumantu Pashupalak Mahasabha, works with pastoral communities in Kangra to rebuild value for wool and for those who carry it. His approach centres access: visibility and fair markets, rights and representation, knowledge and confidence—so that pastoral communities can advocate for themselves and sustain the futures they belong to.

Training and advocacy are grounded to build pastoral expertise from within: securing grazing rights; strengthening mechanical shearing, sorting and timely grading near herds; improving veterinary care; restoring economic confidence in sheep wool; and expanding opportunities in mixed-flock livelihoods, including the rising value of goat milk and cheese.

The Mahasabha encourages youth to build new skills and market linkages, while women become anchors in settlements and co-creators of product futures. Ageing herders are engaged along migratory routes so knowledge flows both ways—rooted in lived practice, responsive to changing markets. Together, they are also exploring ways in which technology could be leveraged to support herders in the higher pastures through tracking and emergency response mechanisms. This builds a shared, continuous, and openly held value chain resilient to change.

Belonging, here, is guardianship: protecting rights, expanding access and ensuring that those who move with the mountains continue to be seen, heard and valued. When wool is recognised as ecological, cultural and economic value in motion, pastoralism moves forward grounded in care, guided by those who know the rhythms of the land both old and new.



AKSHAY's WORK IS SUPPORTED BY DESI OON (CENTRE FOR PASTORIALISM) AND ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.



MAQSUMA AKHTAR & SONAM ANGMO

Ice Hockey, Ladakh

In the high Himalayas, frozen ponds become winter playgrounds where Ice hockey is more than a sport—it is the warm, beating heart of a community coming together. The rink becomes a place where grit, belonging, and possibility synchronise in spirit, despite the challenges of limited infrastructure, costly equipment, or training on -30°C nights.

For 16-year-old Maqsuma Akhtar of Goshan, Kargil, her journey began by watching her father and sister play. What started as a leisure activity became serious when the coach of the boys' team asked her to form a women's team of her own. Society questioned her, but the senior boys welcomed her without hesitation. They trained with her, protected her confidence and never let her feel out of place. Loss after loss, she kept returning to the ice, supported by coaches, teammates, seniors and a growing ecosystem that refused to give up on her. Maqsuma rose to become the Right Forward of the team Humas Queens, proving that girls, too, can lead on ice.

Further north, in Kanji, Leh, 23-year-old defender Sonam Angmo discovered Ice hockey at a local camp. She trained through freezing mornings, balanced exams with late-night practice and pushed past the cost of gear. Her commitment carried her to the Indian Women's Ice Hockey Team and achievements such as representing India in Thailand, competing in the Khelo India League and captaining the Sham Eagles. Leadership taught her how to motivate, how to hold a team together and how each new opponent expands the horizon of what is possible. *“Challenges bahut hain... but support itna hai ki unhe face karne mein bhi maza aata hai.”*

Across Ladakh, players like Maqsuma and Sonam are rising through a winter sport ecology built player-to-player, supported by families, neighbours, seniors and communities who keep the rinks alive. Their journeys are never travelled alone; the ice holds every mentor and teammate who made their steps possible. It is a living ecology shaped not by individual glory, but by a collective determination to lift each other higher.

As another player, Ghulam Mustafa, says with unwavering conviction:
“Chahe das saal ho, bees saal ho, chalis saal ho ya pachaas saal ho, someday this sport will take the kids of Ladakh to the Olympics.”

ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION SUPPORTS GRASSROOTS-LED ICE HOCKEY INITIATIVES IN LADAKH.





Maqsuma Akhtar



Sonam Angmo



HIMANSHU REGESOI Kinnaur Film Society

Himanshu Regesoi carries an unmistakable fire to make room for Kinnauri stories, storytellers and ways of seeing. Born in Sangla, he is a self-taught filmmaker whose love for cinema, music, astronomy and local lore deepens the worlds he builds. For Himanshu, filmmaking is not escape but return to a way of honouring the land that raised him, even as he questions how climate change, migration and cultural shifts are transforming it.

This commitment fuels his work with the Kinnaur Film Society, a growing platform he dreams into being with other young creatives. Together, they hope to build a regional film ecosystem where Kinnauri people can tell their own stories, preserve their own memories and experiment with film as a medium of cultural visibility and social change.

Across his stories, this vision is explored: He and his teammate Tamanna are working on a written tale of Chandra Kanta which draws from oral folklore; Story of Zungtee by Akki explores the Satluj as lifeline and witness; his in-process story on Tibetan lives in Kinnaur traces coexistence and belonging; and his piece on folk music listens for memory in sound. His film Hue wrestles with the conflict of a homeland changing, while Baunmich revives a folktale, investigating whether it is myth or reality. Together, they form a textured archive—Himanshu's way of ensuring Kinnaur sees itself, and is seen, with honesty and heart.

HIMANSHU IS A FELLOW OF VOICE OF INDIA'S STORYTELLING FELLOWSHIP, 2025 HOSTED BY HIMAL PRAKRITI AND SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





HANEESH KATNAWER

Kutaj & Himalayan Hemp

As an entrepreneur and researcher, Haneesh works at the intersections of society and sustainability, co-founding Himalayan Hemp with Sonam Sodha, a social enterprise with a cooperative model built through close collaboration with Himalayan artisans and farmers to create eco-conscious hemp products, such as reusable hemp sanitary pads and India's first hemp building project. His work is rooted in the lived textures of the region, shaped not by distant theories but by everyday conversations, dilemmas and inherited complexities. As he observes the layered realities of caste, patriarchy, superstition and stigma, he approaches these difficult terrains with a sensitivity drawn from life lived in the mountains.

Kutaj grows from this same soil of attentiveness.

एक पेड़ से शुरू हुई कहानी अब गाँव की आवाज़ बन रही है।

The deep-rooted kutaj tree reminds the community that life can persist and flourish even in challenging ground. From this spirit emerged Kutaj—a space where children's laughter, village stories and collective strength meet.

Each month, the hub gathers people to reflect on themes shaping everyday life: inequality, belief systems, drugs and rehabilitation, women's experiences, and shifting regional realities. It is a long-term commitment to making a place where people can speak, listen, and imagine differently.

These are not easy stories; they demand confrontation and a finely tuned understanding of how belief, stigma and survival fold into one another in the everyday lives of people. Through photo stories, films and community dialogue, he invites people to see themselves—and each other—with greater honesty and compassion.

HANEESH IS A FELLOW OF VOICE OF INDIA'S STORYTELLING FELLOWSHIP, 2025 HOSTED BY HIMAL PRAKRITI AND SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





RIDER STORIES

Surbhi Moudgil Spiti Water Project Ride

The volunteer riders were more than participants—they became custodians of a shared dream. Using local materials and traditional techniques, they helped build water storage units that were as much about culture and community as they were about conservation. Among them was Surbhi Moudgil, who reflects on how a group of strangers—riders and villagers alike—grew into a collective bound by purpose, humility and learning. What began as a mission to build a water shed, soon transformed into a collaborative journey with the community, fostering a shared sense of connection around a lifegiving resource.

My journey to Pangmo was unlike anything I had ever known. Travel usually brings fleeting conversations but here, we weren't visitors. We were contributors. With the villagers guiding us, we learned how locally available natural materials could be shaped into something enduring and everlasting. Even when the work was tough—sometimes tearing down and rebuilding sections—we stayed mindful that what we were shaping was not just a reservoir, but the future pulse of a community.



The six of us, strangers at the start, became a team within hours. The villagers became our teammates too. Different lives, different worlds—yet one shared intent. We laboured together, listened to each other, exchanged stories, and absorbed the quiet wisdom that scarcity teaches. Their relationship with their environment moved me deeply; they used every resource with respect, precision and gratitude.

What touched me most was their generosity—of knowledge, spirit, and warmth. Despite our inexperience, they never judged us. They taught patiently, encouraged constantly and welcomed us with a grace that dissolved every boundary. That openness made us want to work harder, to honour the trust they placed in us, even as complete amateurs.

“In Pangmo, we didn’t just build a reservoir for water—we built a reservoir of trust, humility and shared humanity. Sometimes, the strongest structures are the ones made with our hands, but held together by our hearts.”

This project renewed my hope that, even in the face of accelerating industrial impact on nature, communities like Pangmo still hold a timeless wisdom that no modern tool can replicate. To be welcomed into something larger than yourself—to be taught, included and trusted—is an experience that lingers long after you leave.

Clifton Shipway

The Great Himalayan Exploration

The Great Himalayan Exploration is a collaborative initiative between UNESCO and Royal Enfield where rider-researchers embark on motorcycling expeditions to explore and document the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of the Indian Himalayan region. Riding deep into landscapes, they live with communities, learn from the custodians of tradition and help safeguard practices that continue to shape the region’s living culture. Each edition features a specific region and their practices. Clifton Shipway, a photographer and rider, reflects on his experience of being a part of the 40-rider troupe in The Great Himalayan Exploration Edition 3, across Ladakh.



“When I set out on a long ride, I find myself looking forward not to the destination but to the unpredictability. I look forward to being humbled.

That ride wasn’t just a journey—it was a reminder that culture, craft and heritage aren’t museum pieces. They are living, breathing things that ride pillion with us, quietly fading unless we choose to stop, listen and carry them forward. It taught me that sometimes the most important thing you can do as a rider isn’t to conquer a pass or log the miles—it’s to witness. To learn. To tell the stories that matter.

I think anyone who’s a genuine adventure motorcyclist has an instinctive love for the mountains, but along with that comes a heartbeat to see the encroachment, waste and the quiet erosion of places we’re privileged to travel through. Motorcyclists recognise this responsibility—to protect what holds us in awe.

This journey became a way for me to be part of that preservation process. Not just moving from destination to destination but stepping into people’s lives, learning their histories, their homes and the challenges shaping them. I had no idea about the painful severing of Baltistan during Partition or how deeply those stories still sit in daily life.

A core truth that stands out here is that these experiences are for those who are ready to care and respect. Sometimes we arrive with all our motorcycle riding gear and we’re loud and boisterous—excited because we’re on a great adventure. But for those who join a project with real impact, the journey asks you to show up, pay attention and give more than you take.

On these rides, when we sit with people and listen and interact with their family history and their cultural practices, we show the communities that we actually care about what they’ve shared and that they are not a check box on a list or a photograph for an Instagram profile. We let them feel recognised.

Two years on, the friendships that took root with communities in Ladakh continue to grow.”



Keisiang Monroe Phukan Ride for a Cleaner Himalayas, Zemithang

The “Ride for a Cleaner Himalayas” was a purpose-driven journey to the Gorsam Kora Festival 2025—five days of riding, learning and understanding the waste crisis in remote Himalayan villages.

“I remember the ride like it was yesterday,” Monroe said, her voice energised with passion and recognition. One of the twenty-five riders on the journey, she recalled how quickly strangers turned into a collective. “There’s always some connection with someone else. The sense of community happens naturally. Everyone is there for the same purpose.”

A passionate biker and member of several Northeast riding clubs, Monroe believes rides like this deepen one’s relationship with the place. “The riding community is very conscious about the environment. They are sensitive towards the mountains, especially in such remote parts of Arunachal Pradesh. When we join rides, it is to learn about a community—to go deeper and understand more about them.”

‘Ride for a Cleaner Himalayas’ was curated by Further and Beyond to give participants a first-hand experience of the zero-waste work in Zemithang. The trip included workshops with the Northeast Waste Collective, village visits to Sangti and Zemithang, and time at the waste park—understanding zero-waste action and community-led environmental stewardship. *“We also volunteered at the Gorsam Kora Festival, collecting waste alongside community members.”*

The ride offered both a macro and micro perspective on how everyday actions accumulate into unmanageable waste. *“They gave us a small bamboo container to store cigarette butts at the start of the ride. We were to empty it mindfully at proper disposal spots. These practices make you pay attention to how small gestures matter. It changes the way you move through the mountains. I carry it with me on every ride now, and I’ve introduced it to other riders too.”*

For Monroe, volunteering wasn’t the highlight but a natural part of being present—riding, learning, showing up with intention, and sharing purpose came first. And in that spirit, she recognised a familiar refrain. *“As Merwyn always tells us,” she laughed, “it’s these that take it further and beyond.”*

Riders form an influential community across the mountains—open to experience, shaped by camaraderie and bound by a quiet sense of responsibility. Monroe recalled with amusement how everyone slipped one after another on black ice while speeding toward Zemithang, a moment that captured their zest for fun as much as their togetherness. As nomadic ambassadors, they carry stories, care, and conversations from place to place, leaving trails of learning across the ranges they travel.







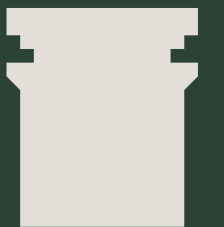




चूल्ह

... repair is continuous,
hands reshape the mud,
rework the bamboo,
replace the wood
the hearth never completely breaks...

PAVILION 4
Craft-Conservation
Ecologies



BARDO CHHAM MASKMAKERS

Craft Conservation, Shergaon, Arunachal Pradesh

Craft is never just craft. In Shergaon—a forested valley of West Kameng—mask-making is a conversation across time: between belief and landscape, body and spirit, artefact and performance, memory and material. To call these simply “masks” would be to tell only a part of their story.

Bardo Chham, the iconic folk dance of the Sherdukpen community, is performed during Prido-Chhepchi, a day when earthly life and spiritual imagination meet. Here, mask and movement are as inseparable and conflicting as the dichotomy inherent in the name itself—Bardo, the liminal space between death and rebirth, and Chham, the ritual dance that enacts this passage. At the centre of this performance lies the story of Apo Dikchung—the hunter whose violence against animals leads to karmic reckoning and rebirth. Through a dramatic and energetic enactment, dancers embody about 12 animal beings—tiger, dragon, horse, sheep, monkey, dog, rat and more—moving to drums and cymbals that reaffirm a moral and ecological truth. The story carries a profound lesson: harming other life forms is harming one’s own life, each generation must understand its duties towards nature and society, and that karma follows even after death.

For centuries, *Bardo Chham* masks were carved within the community, each a vessel awaiting animation through breath and rhythm. But as the tradition waned, and with only one master artisan—Pema Tashi of Morshing—the craft stood on fragile ground.

A revival began in 2023, training local artisans—Sang Wangdi, Passang Norbu, Ledo Thungon, T N Thongchi and others—through workshops that re-rooted carving in cosmology and conservation. The masks sparked new dialogue with the region’s wild beings, especially its elusive cats, becoming both livelihood and living lineage.

Not everything survives the negotiation and passage of craft through generations, but what does endure reshapes itself as it moves: story to story, hand to hand. In the past two years, the craft has been revived in Shergaon with ten artisans who are now creating these masks. Shergaon’s maskmakers are rebuilding a delicate bridge between heritage and the future—where art, ecology and faith move together and craft transcends Bardo to become a living vessel of community memory.

THE BARDO CHHAM MASK REVIVAL PROJECT IS AN INITIATIVE BETWEEN VANWASI AADIWASI FOUNDATION; GARUNG THUK; WILDLIFE TRUST OF INDIA, SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





LUNDUP DORJAY & KAVYA TRIVEDI

Tar Village, Ladakh

“We wanted to bring them back—to give them a reason to stay.”

That was the quiet intention in Tar, a small village in the high mountains of Ladakh.

Once on the verge of emptying out—with only 14% residents living here year-round, most of them elders—the village chose to rebuild itself on its own terms, confident of forging a model of development that feels native, grounded and theirs.

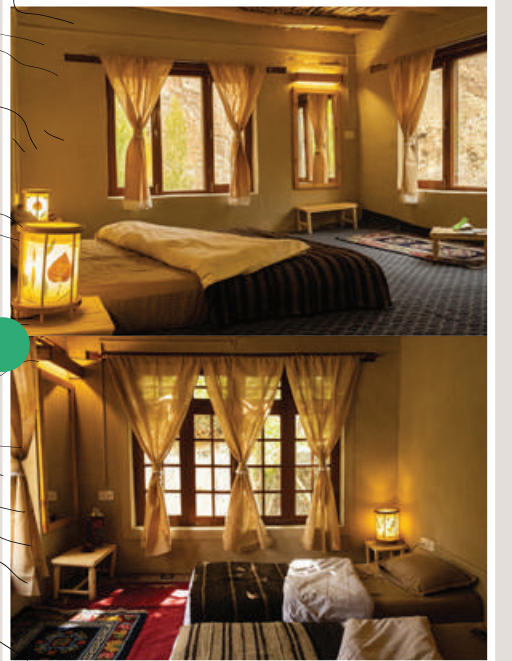
The revival began with a simple belief: if income and learning returned to the village, the youth would too. Instead of importing solutions, Tar turned inward—sourcing and making everything locally through traditional practices. Old homes were repaired into farmstays using willow, mud, stone and clay—materials that hold warmth according to knowledge passed through hands over generations. Every step became a shared act, ensuring villagers never felt displaced in their own homes. Tourism was structured with fairness at its core: guests rotate across 10 homestays so income is shared equally, and every visitor enters a rhythm defined by the village, not the market, such that the people do not feel alienated in their own spaces.

With livelihoods returning, learning began to return too. Children were strangers to each other and to their land. Winter and summer camps now bring them back to their folk songs, medicinal plants, wool crafts, wildlife and elders. A village-made ice hockey rink gathers them all.

In 2024, Tar became Ladakh’s first Community-Conserved Area and celebrated Snow Leopard Day at the village scale. It was also named India’s Best Tourism Village 2024 (Responsible Tourism) by the Ministry of Tourism, yet the village remains faithful to its initial dream. It is mindful of the fine balance it needs to maintain between being a sought-after ‘destination’ and its commitment of embracing homecoming at its core—be it a community member, a returning youth or a responsible traveller.

TAR VILLAGE IS SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





RANGJALU BASUMATARY, KIRAT BRAHMA & NABAJEET BASUMATARY

Rangapani Responsible Tourism Site, Assam

Rangapani, a vibrant Bodo village on the fringe of Manas National Park, is shaping a new imagination of responsible tourism—one rooted in youth, agency, reciprocity and cultural grounding. Here, responsibility is not an external mandate but a lived ethic carried by proactive young people like Kirat Brahma, Rangjalu Basumatary, Rahul Das Basumatary, Nihir Basumatary and Nabajeet Basumatary. Each of them stepped out of the village to gain exposure, only to return with new skills and a shared intention: to pool their learnings back into their community, working and building organisations anchored in their heritage and immediate surroundings.

Zankla Studio and Wings of Florican are two such movements—independent yet interdependent, growing together to create a shared ecosystem rather than competing for attention. Their collaboration comes alive for the Bengal Florican, a critically endangered bird of which only a few hundred remain globally. Twenty five of these birds have been seen in Kokilabari Seed Farm near Rangapani. Zankla’s commitment to preserving Bodo textile heritage meets Wings of Florican’s mission to create a headgear that is both toy and teaching tool—heritage made playful, conservation made tactile, and a symbol of a youth-led ecology of change.

A central space where this spirit converges is the emerging Knowledge Exchange Hub. Here, community members, children, local organisations—and even visitors—enter a system of mutual exchange: knowledge for knowledge, skill for skill. Tourism becomes co-learning, not consumption. Travellers offer what they know and, in return, step into the everyday life of Rangapani—splitting bamboo, helping build fences or working alongside artisans at Zankla Studio. Every visitor becomes a participant in a living classroom, carrying away a piece of Rangapani’s quiet wisdom. This displaces the usual tourism model of infiltration and one-way interaction.

Together, these youth-led initiatives are forming a prototype model village—from a “zero-budget museum” preserving memory to homestay improvements grounded in dignity and care. Here, heritage is lived, learning is reciprocal, and tourism becomes a shared act of shaping the future. Rangapani’s legacy is not only what has been inherited, but what its young people are courageously building today.

RANGJALU BASUMATARY WAS A FELLOW OF GREEN HUB VIDEO FELLOWSHIP 2021-22, NABAJEET BASUMATARY WAS A FELLOW OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM FELLOWSHIP 2021-22; KIRAT BRAHMA WAS A RECIPIENT OF GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD CONSERVATION GRANT, 2023.





NANDALAL BASUMATARY, KWRWMDAW BASUMATARY, ASHAK BASUMATARY Project Sifung, Chirang (BTR), Assam

Music and dance have long held the Bodo community together, yet many instruments, skills, and practices were quietly fading. Instrument makers struggled to earn, young people had few chances to learn and traditions that once lived in every home were slowly slipping away.

Project Sifung began with a simple desire: to learn to play the community's own instruments—the Sifung (flute), Kham, Serja, Taal and others—whose sounds had begun to disappear from daily life. The lack of recognition and the dwindling spaces where they were played made them harder to hear, and easier to forget.

Nandalal Basumatary, Kwrwmdaw Basumatary, artist Ashak Basumatary and about 20 youth set out to document these traditions, only to find that the scarcity of artisans—both makers and musicians—demanded a deeper response. Learning to play soon meant learning to make, reviving knowledge held in hands as much as in memory.

Because the craft is expensive, time-intensive and lacked markets, sustainability became essential. Revival took shape through transmission: teaching anyone who wished to learn, forming an ecosystem of learn-do-teach. Knowledge moved forward through mentorship, and inward through practice, creating a shared network of skill, care and legacy.

Project Sifung continues to nurture a heritage which is people-dependent but not people-limited. Opportunity creation is central—young artisans are encouraged to train others, artisan-musicians travel weekly to various branches to work with local craftspersons, livelihoods are strengthened and even fading household practices like eri-silk rearing are returning.

Revival however is not romanticisation of a past. It is a responsible accommodation to changing times. Once bound by rigid gender roles—men playing, women dancing—Project Sifung now hosts an all-girls maker-performer troupe that has shifted perceptions across Assam, inspiring Bodo communities to question, evolve, and become more inclusive in shared cultural heritage.

Revival here is not nostalgia. It is leadership and collective courage through adaptation making space for culture to breathe again, together—emotionally resonant, like the music itself.

PROJECT SIFUNG IS AN INITIATIVE OF SIFUNG HARIMU AFAD (SHA) AND THE ACTION NORTHEAST TRUST, SUPPORTED BY ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION.





GREEN HUB X ROYAL ENFIELD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM FELLOWSHIP Western Himalayas, Conclave

About the Fellowship 2024-25

Green Hub x Royal Enfield Responsible Tourism Fellowship - Western Himalayas, is a six-month immersive programme that enables young people from Himalayan communities to safeguard their natural and cultural heritage by rethinking tourism as non-invasive, sustainable and ground-up.

Nurtured by mentors with a deep experience in community-centred practice, fellows learn to design tourism experiences connected to people, place, livelihoods, identity and shared stewardship. By reading the layers of each landscape and understanding both tensions and strengths, they create proposals that communities can naturally adopt as their own, ensuring tourism strengthens rather than strains fragile mountain ecosystems.

The fellowship began in 2022 in Northeast India and has now expanded to the Western Himalayas for the first time.

The inaugural batch of the fellowship is currently working in four unique Himalayan locations—Nishni (Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand), Rangdum (Suru Valley, Ladakh), Sethan (Hampta Valley, Himachal Pradesh) and Sissu (Lahaul Valley, Himachal Pradesh). Across these landscapes, fellows are addressing pressing local challenges.

In NISHNI (UTTARKASHI, UTTARAKHAND), fellows worked closely with villagers to revive Koti-Banal heritage architecture, map traditional meadow trails and design waste-management systems that fit the terrain as well as community routines.

In RANGDUM (SURU VALLEY, LADAKH), the focus was on conserving ecologically sensitive wetlands. Through picnic-zone planning, a women-led café and strengthened waste practices with SHGs and youth, tourism became a tool for conservation and local autonomy.

In SETHAN/HAMPTA (KULLU, HIMACHAL PRADESH), the emphasis was on youth leadership—with fellows co-developing a zero-waste framework, visitor guidelines and awareness tools that the village could maintain independently.

In SISSU (LAHAUL, HIMACHAL PRADESH), fellows collaborated with vendors, guides and residents to develop people-led visitor management systems, plastic-reduction solutions and interpretation trails that honour the valley's ecology.

Together, these projects show how responsible tourism grows best: community-led, culturally grounded and shaped by the people who call these mountains home.





















**bukhari...
embers from the old
carry onto the new
the hearth will carry
stories through generations
on to many more...**

PAVILION 5
Material Journeys
& Futures



MATERIALS OF EVERYDAY LIFE: MAPPING THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE HIMALAYAS

Curated by Shubhi Sachan,
Material Library of India

Materials of Everyday Life presents an inquiry into how materials shape and are shaped by the ecological, cultural, and social landscapes of the Indian Himalayan region. Developed by the Material Library of India, this installation explores the everyday material culture of the mountains to highlight forms of circularity, regional intelligence, and regenerative design that emerge from long-standing relationships between people and place.

Contemporary design and consumption patterns often prioritise speed, standardisation, and convenience. In the process, the intrinsic meaning of materials, their origins, behaviours, and ecological thresholds has been diminished. This exhibition responds to that disconnect by foregrounding the material wisdom embedded in Himalayan communities, where daily life is guided by seasonality, resource awareness, and the principle of using only what the land can sustain.

As one enters the Himalayan region—moving from the lower foothills to the higher altitudes—the meaning of everyday materials begins to shift. Objects that dominate modern life, such as food, water, plastics, cosmetics, and textiles, gradually loosen their industrial identities. With every ascent, they reappear in local, land-derived forms shaped by climate, terrain, and community knowledge. This transformation becomes the conceptual spine of the installation.

The installation is thus structured as a journey across altitudes, beginning with familiar objects from our modern lifestyle. As one moves upward through the



region, these industrial materials dissolve into locally rooted alternatives: grasses used as textiles and architectural elements, plant-based cleaning agents, natural fibres, handmade vessels, and land-based cosmetic practices. These transitions illustrate how materials evolve in response to terrain, climate, and community needs.

Rather than positioning the Himalayas as a mythical or pristine landscape, the project presents it as a living system of knowledge. Here, materials are not commodities but part of an interlinked cycle of making, using, repairing, and returning. Every object reflects an understanding of limits, regeneration, and coexistence.

By mapping these practices, **Materials of Everyday Life** invites visitors to reconsider their own material habits. What we often treat as disposable in urban life holds value, labour, and ecological consequence. What appears simple in mountain cultures reflects generations of experimentation, adaptation, and craft.

The exhibition proposes that the future of sustainable design does not lie solely in new technologies, but in recognising and reviving the intelligence that already exists in regional material traditions. Through the lens of the Himalayas, it urges a shift from extraction-driven consumption to systems of belonging, responsibility, and care.

MATERIALS OF EVERYDAY LIFE



REGIONAL . SEASONAL . ORIGINAL

The material culture of the Himalayas is rooted in regional, seasonal and original ways of living shaped by altitude, climate and ecological thresholds. Textiles made from local fibres, food preserved through sun and air, plant-based cosmetics and biodegradable tools—all emerged from an intelligence attuned to the land. These materials belonged to cycles of regeneration because they were produced in alignment with seasons, consumed in moderation and returned to the soil without harm.

Modern materials, however, follow a different logic—one of standardisation, industrial processing and disposability. Plastics, synthetic textiles, packaged foods and chemical cosmetics disrupt mountain ecologies because they are disconnected from place, time and natural limits. At the centre of both systems is water. It nourishes crops, sustains fibres, enables crafts and defines what can thrive in each altitude. When materials respect water, they sustain life; when they burden it, the entire ecosystem feels the strain.





REGIONAL FIBRES



In the Himalayas, fibres represented systems of survival through history. Wool, hemp, nettle and various grasses were shaped into clothing, ropes, baskets, insulation, roofing and protective layers against rain, cold and intense winds. Each fibre corresponded to the altitude and season: lighter weaves for lower valleys, dense wool for high passes and grass-based textiles for storage, architecture and daily tools. These materials emerged from the land, evolved through generations of experimentation and returned naturally to the environment when their life cycles ended.

With industrialisation, synthetic and blended textiles became accessible, offering affordability, uniformity and reduced labour. While convenient, these materials rely on processes such as dyeing, washing and finishing that interact differently with the mountain environment, especially where waste and water systems are limited.

As textiles travel through the landscape, they inevitably meet water through washing, runoff or disposal, connecting material choice directly to the health of Himalayan rivers.



PRODUCTS OF DAILY USE



In the Himalayan region, everyday needs were once met through locally available materials such as bamboo, grass, clay, wood and natural fibres. These objects served multiple purposes: storage, packaging, carrying, protection from rain and even insulation. Because they were regional and seasonal, they fit into cycles of use and renewal shaped by the land.

Plastics entered the mountains as durable, lightweight and affordable alternatives that simplified transport and storage across difficult terrain. They expanded access to packaged food, water and essential goods, but their life cycles do not align with high-altitude ecosystems where collection and recycling are constrained by geography.

Over time, plastics tend to remain in the landscape, travelling downslope through rainfall, wind and meltwater. Their journey inevitably merges with the Himalayan water network, linking material flows to the region's rivers, springs and catchments.



FOOD & MEDICINES



Food in the Himalayas was shaped by altitude, climate and the rhythm of seasons. What grew locally determined what was eaten and what could not be grown was preserved through sun-drying, smoking, roasting or fermenting. These methods required no external energy and allowed communities to survive long winters, monsoons and periods of isolation. Ingredients doubled as medicine and nutrition, thus every part of the plant or crop found a purpose.

With market access and mobility, packaged and processed foods became more common, offering convenience, longer shelf life as well as a wider variety of flavours. These foods rely on packaging, additives and supply chains that interact differently with mountain systems.

Whether traditional or modern, food is deeply connected to water for cultivation, preparation, preservation and disposal. In the Himalayas, where water shapes entire ecosystems, the materials around food flow directly into the watershed.



SELF CARE



Cosmetic and personal care practices in the Himalayas developed from what the region could provide. Twigs served as toothbrushes, ash and herbal powders as cleansers, plant saps and oils as moisturisers, and clays as protective layers against sun or cold. These materials were seasonal, locally harvested and aligned with the body's needs in different altitudes and climates. They formed a knowledge system where everyday care was closely tied to ecology.

Industrial cosmetics brought uniformity, convenience and specialised benefits, expanding access to products that were once difficult to obtain. However, these products often come with packaging and ingredients that behave differently in mountain environments, especially where waste and water treatment systems are minimal.

Water plays a central role in both systems—from preparing plant-based pastes to washing off modern formulations. In the Himalayas, or otherwise, whatever touches the skin eventually meets the streams and rivers flowing below.





SMART MATERIALS LAB BY DESIGN MUMBAI

curated by Chris Lefteri,
Chris Lefteri Design

Materials have the ability to create experiences and memories. They communicate and embody multiple stories, depending on how the designer has interpreted them, where they are used and how the designer translates them into the final application. Materials development is becoming more focused on building these new heroes, seen most through the growth of alternative materials from nature. Materials need their stories to be told by both the producers but also the designers who transform them into final products.

Uplifting Tales from nature

There is a surge of nature-inspired, woodland materials taking over the design world. From the rugged texture of tree bark to the intricate networks of mushroom roots and the reinvention of wood waste, nature is no longer just a muse—it’s a material source. These bio-based innovations aren’t just beautiful; they’re reshaping sustainability, turning natural by-products into the next generation of environmentally conscious design. It’s a return to our roots—literally—where every material tells a story of regeneration, responsibility, and connection to the earth.

MAIN MATERIAL STORIES:

PEELSPHERE®

60% grain by-products, 30% plant polymers, 5% plant oils, less than 5% natural ingredients (including colourants), and less than 1% bio-based polyurethane top coat. Manufactured by PEELSPHERE

Barktex®

Production uses no additives (binders, dyes or colourants) for the basic “monomaterial” Bark Cloth version. Comes in 2000 × 3000 mm (2 × 3 m) sheets; thickness ranges from 0.3 mm to 3.5 mm. Manufactured by Barktex

Tomato Leather

Tomato by-product fibres bonded with natural binders form a PU-free, biodegradable composite, replicating leather’s strength, flexibility and tactile aesthetics. Manufactured by Bioleather

Panda Poop Paper

Recycled pulp blended with sterilised panda-bamboo fibres forms a biodegradable, plantable paper (Burst Index ≥300, Ring Crush ≥300, Absorbency ≤50, Compression ≥250), showcasing eco-innovation. Manufactured by M-SEEN

ELEVATE®

Standard thickness 0.8–1.2 mm with custom thicknesses possible. Environmental impact versus animal leather: up to 95% fewer greenhouse gas emissions, 89% less water usage and 71% less energy usage. Manufactured by UNCAGED Innovations

PENAPALNE — REAL LEAF LEATHER

Preserved natural leaves laminated with bio-based binders and coatings, forming durable, water-resistant, flexible composites for sustainable material innovation. Manufactured by Penapalne

MATERIAL SAMPLES OF:

KURZ

Alpiwood

NOTPLA Seaweed Paper

Karrun

Organoid

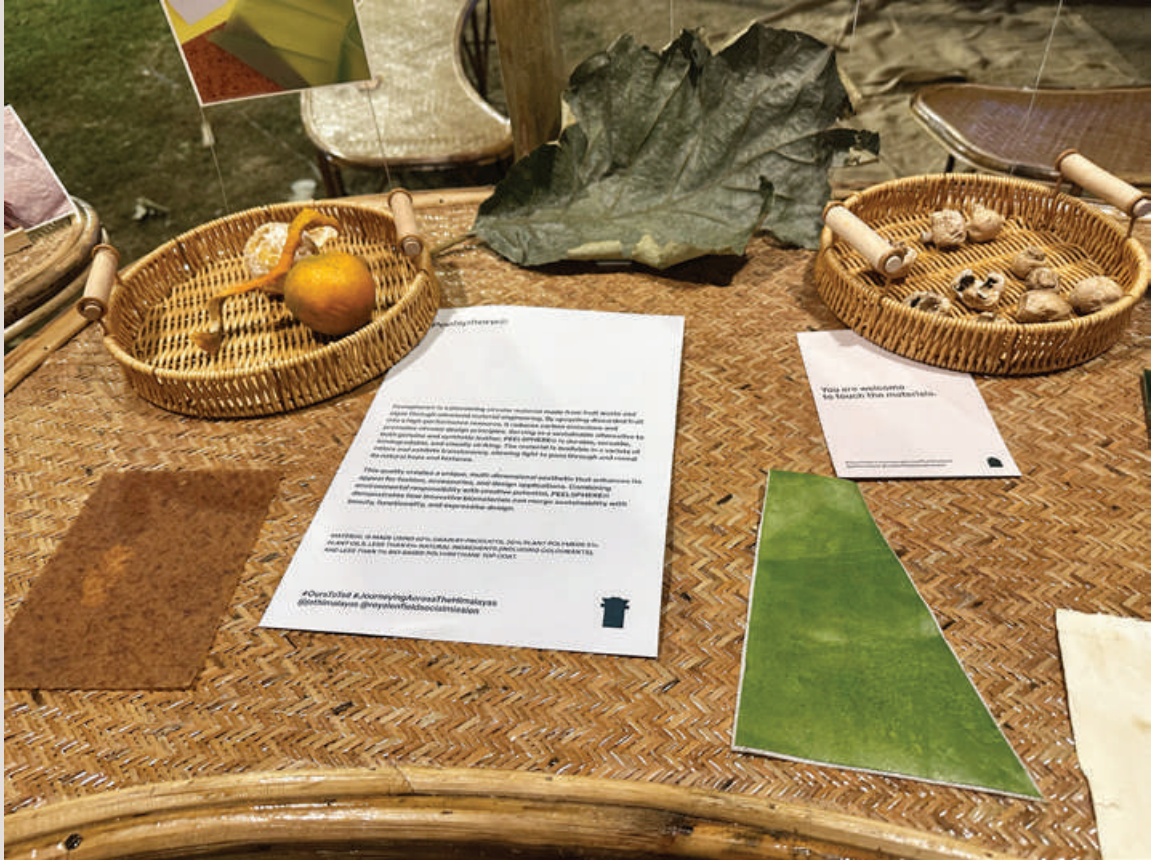
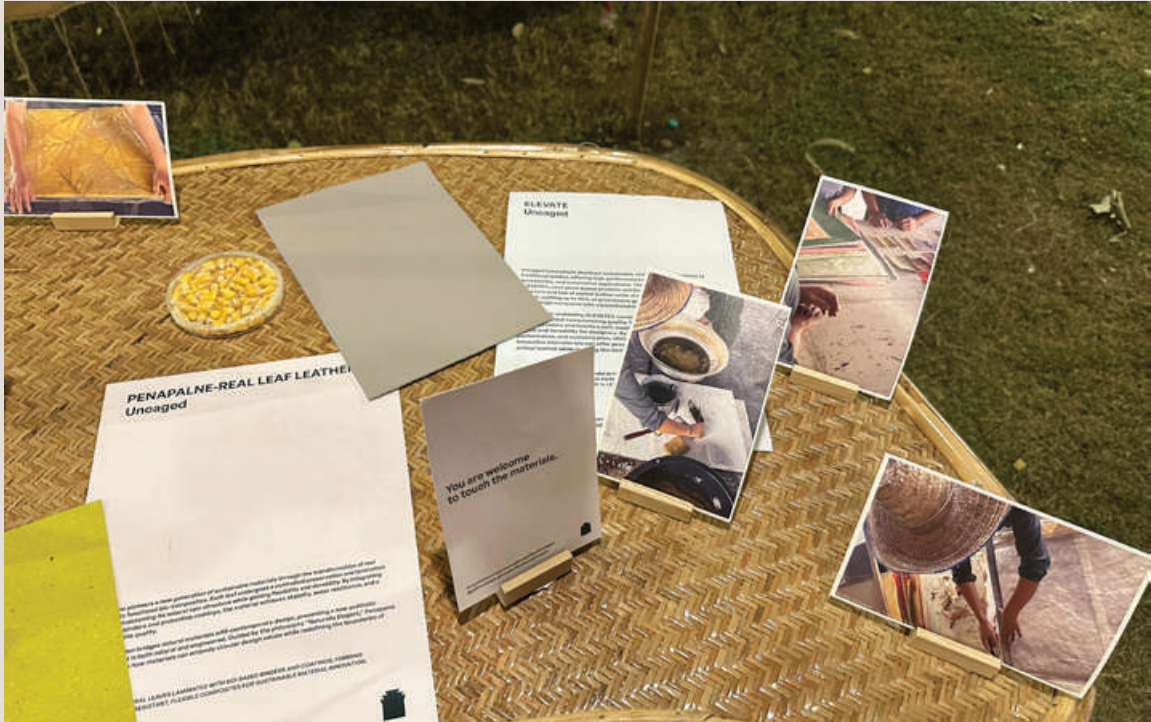
Accoya

Mycel

PureTree

Caracara

Metis Seagrass

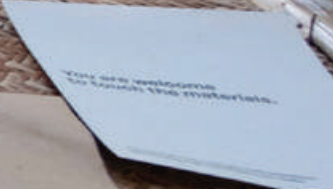
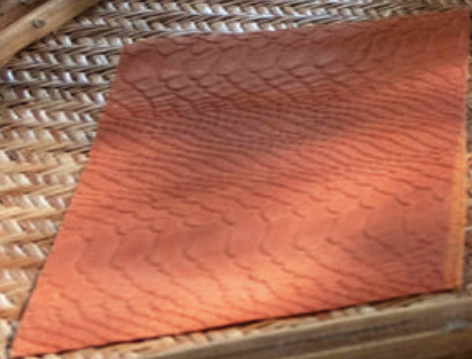


TOMATO LEATHER Bioleather

Tomato leather is a sustainable, plant-based alternative to animal and synthetic leathers. Made from tomato by-products like skins and seeds, it's PU- and PVC-free, biodegradable, and environmentally friendly. Using natural binders and innovative processing, tomato fibers are transformed into a flexible, durable material that looks and feels like traditional leather, without the use of chemicals or animal products.

Tomato leather is versatile and can be used in a wide range of products, including fashion items like bags and shoes, as well as interior goods such as upholstery and accessories. Its durability and flexibility make it suitable for various applications while maintaining an eco-friendly profile.

TOMATO BY-PRODUCT FIBERS BONDED WITH NATURAL BINDERS FORM A PU-FREE, BIOGRADABLE AND PVC-FREE BIOLEATHER. [@studiodenew](#)



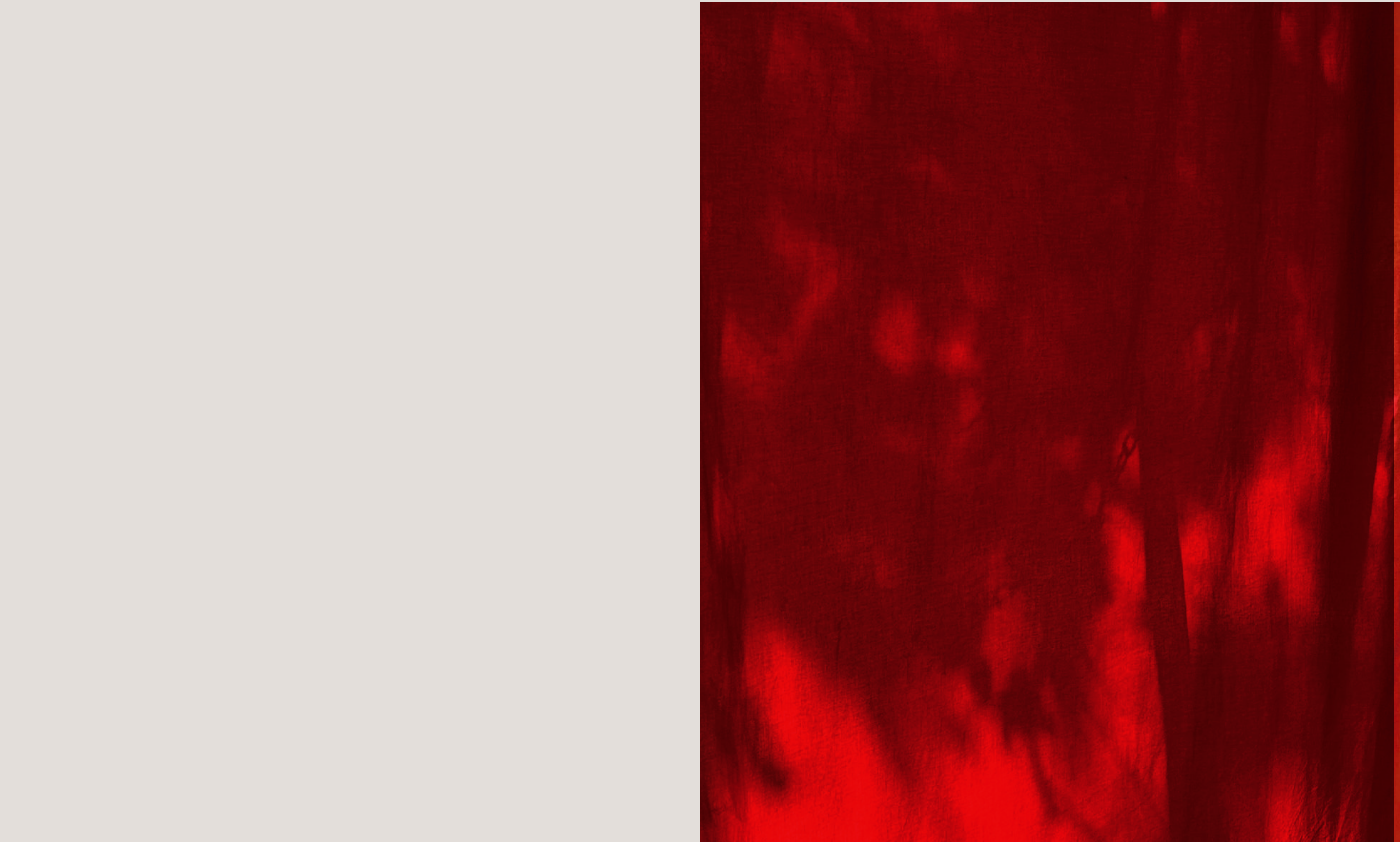


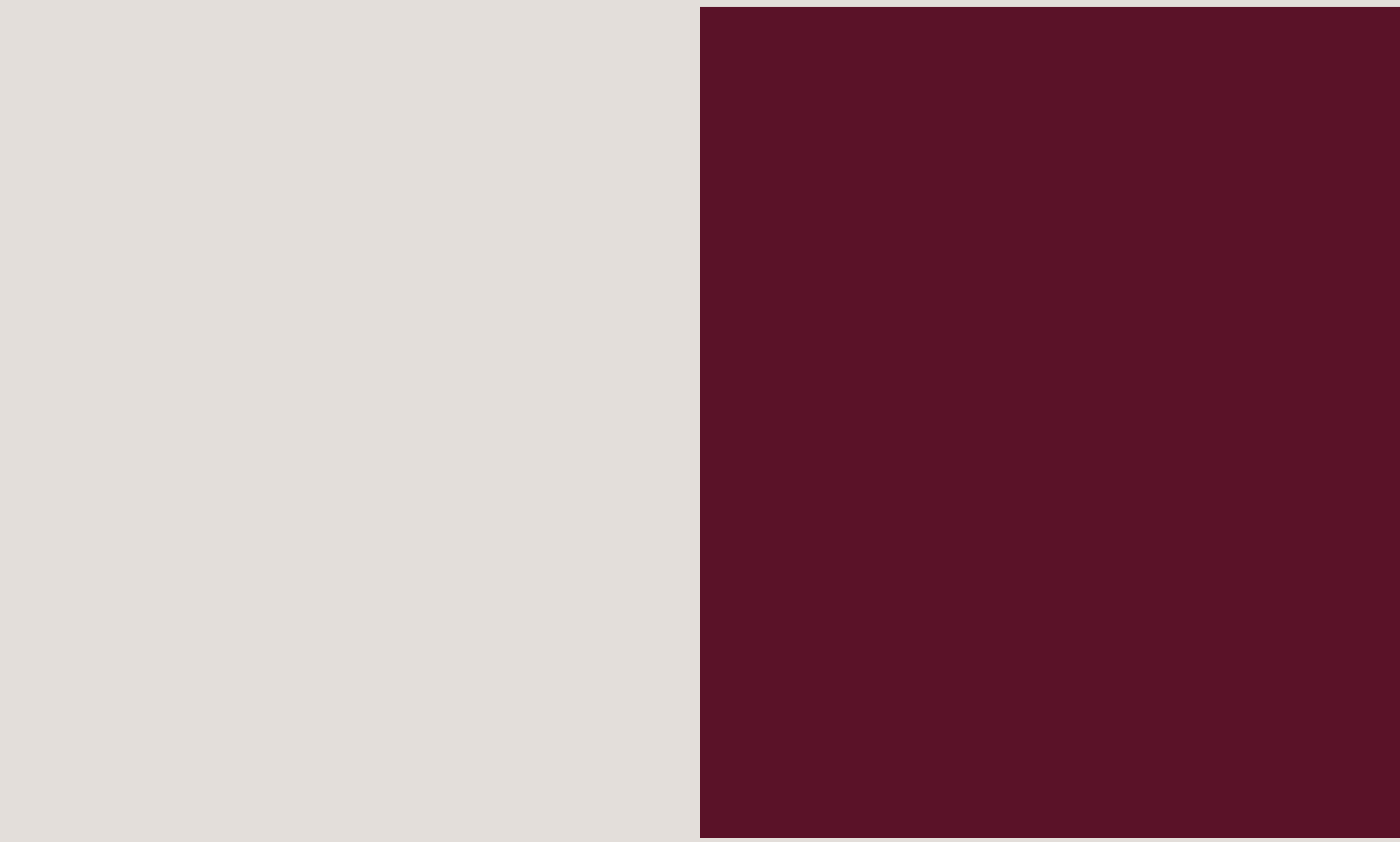












**Many hearths
From me to you,
It is not still,
With me and you,
We share a hearth as we sit here
And belong to the warmth.**

